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For the Record

From an interview with Henry Kissinger in Public Opinion magazine April/May 1983:

Q: Dr. Kissinger, do you support the administration's policy of covert assistance to insurgents, freedom fighters, whatever, in Nicaragua?

A: Yes, I do. It escapes me why we have to apply the Brezhnev doctrine in Central America and assert that any communist government that has established itself can never be changed.

As a policy, I support it. But I don't think it can be carried out with the present system for handling covert operations. If the purpose of the covert operations is to prevent infiltration from Nicaragua through Honduras, then I would rather see an overt American military presence on the Honduran-Nicaraguan border.

I am sympathetic to the covert operations if we can still conduct them the way their name applies. But if covert operations have to be justified in a public debate, they stop being covert and we will wind up losing public support. So, I support the concept—if not every last application. . . .

How large can a covert operation be and still be covert? Can you run a covert war? When you get to that level of activity you have to ask yourself whether you are not better off doing it overtly. I wouldn't make a general rule, but it is something to consider.

Q: An overt covert action in Nicaragua is a war. Should the United States of America go to war with Nicaragua?

A: No. If the stated objective is to prevent infiltration, then I would prefer an overt action. I support the idea of giving military equipment to guerrillas that fight the Sandinistas. That is a legitimate exercise of our intelligence function. . . .